

Rejoicing in the Lord

Simch'at Torah

Psalm 119:9-16

Introduction to Simch'at Torah

Yesterday, my family celebrated Simch'at Torah. Those of us with the Messianic tendencies that come part and parcel with Adonaic culture and theology consider Simch'at Torah to be a very important holiday.

For one thing, Hashem commanded us to observe it.

- [Leviticus 23:36 HCSB](#) You are to present a fire offering to the LORD for seven days. On the eighth day you are to hold a sacred assembly and present a fire offering to the LORD. It is a solemn gathering; you are not to do any daily work.

Like many of God's holidays, the direct purpose was not spelled out for us. God simply said, "Right after the seven days of Sukkot, on the eighth day, I want you to have a solemn and sacred assembly. By the way, I want it to involve fire."

The sages were unable to find any special purpose to the festival of the Eighth day except as expressed in the following parable:

"God is like a king who invites all his children to a feast to last for just so many days; when the time comes for them to depart, He says to them: 'My children, I have a request to make of you. Stay yet another day; I hate to see you go.'"

Around the 9th century, as our people sought creative ways to obey Hashem's command, a special reading from the Prophets began to be a regular part of services. Over the ensuing centuries, the holiday came to be associated with gratitude for the gift of the Word of God. Thus, the name Simch'at Torah which means "Rejoicing in the Torah".

Due to the season, I thought it would be appropriate to consider the "man after God's own heart's" attitude toward the Word.

Psalm 119's poetic structure

Although Bible's chapters and verses are man-made, in the case of Psalm 119, the verses actually do follow the organization as found on the ancient scrolls. There are 176 lines and there are 176 verses.

The lines (verses) are grouped in eights. Each group of 8 is a stanza, and is organized under a Hebrew letter of the *alef-bet*, which are grouped in order, beginning with *alef* and ending with *tav*. 22 letters = 22 stanzas of 8 lines each = 176 lines (verses). So, verses 1-8 each have a first word beginning with *'aleph* and verses 9-16 each have a first word beginning with *beth*, and so on.

Besides that, the psalm employs Hebrew parallelism. Psalm 119 is not the ONLY Scripture that uses *alef-bet* or parallelism. Parallelism is actually a common literary feature of Hebrew poetry in the Old Covenant. This feature can be found in many poetic passages, and sometimes even in narrative, although it is more common in the Psalms and Proverbs. In parallelism, the words of two or more lines of text are directly related in some way.

Recognizing this poetic feature can help us better understand and interpret a passage. For example, the use of parallelism usually means that the message of the text in the larger passage indicates the overall point, rather than individual words or single lines.

Moses proclaimed in the Shema:

- [Deuteronomy 6:4 HCSB](#) "Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One.

The Lord is what? Is He "*ech'ad*" or "*ach'ar*"? Only a stroke of the pen makes the difference between "one" (*ech'ad*) and "another" (*ach'ar*). A dalet only has a small stroke that distinguishes it from a resh. All the universe dangles on this one stroke.



All Scripture points to the Messiah, He is the goal of all Scripture.

- **Romans 10:4 HCSB** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Again, it is critical that we understand the intent of the original language. Many will read the English word “end” and choose the connotation of “the last part; a point that indicates the full extent of something” suggesting that it no longer is applicable.

However, there is another connotation to the word “end” – even in English. That is to consider something the end of an action is to consider it the goal. That is in fact what the Greek word “*telos*” indicates – a goal or destination. With that in mind we understand the passage to mean, not that the coming of the Christ indicates the death of the law, but that its intent is to point us toward Him.

As you can easily see, it is very critical that we understand the Holy Spirit’s intent – even down to each individual word in the text. With that in mind, consider:

Psalm 119’s ten key words

Psalm 119 uses 10 key words that are found in each verse except verse 122. These 10 key words give insights into Hashem’s Word itself:

1. **Torah** = (8451) law; direction; instruction; custom or manner
2. **Edut** = (5715) testimonies; witnesses; laws; revelations
3. **Derek** = (1870) way; road; distance; journey; path; direction; manner or habit
4. **Pikudim** = (6490) precepts; statutes; commandments; has connotation of attending to, seeking out, seeking in vain, what is needed, missing or lacking.
5. **Ch’okim** = (2706/2708) statutes; ordinances; limits; something prescribed; due; connotes law of heaven or law of nature (i.e. law of gravity)
6. **Mitzvot** = (4687) commandments; ordinances; blessings
7. **Mishpattim** = (4941); judgments; justice; ordinances; act of deciding a case; sentence
8. **Davar** = (1697) word; speech; saying; utterance; business or occupation
9. **’Imrah** = (565) utterance; speech; word; hymn or sacred poem
10. **Tzedek** = (6664) justice; rightness; righteousness; what is right, just or normal (as in weights and measures) the standard by which we are weighed.

Revelation of a Person, the Messiah

You may be wondering to yourself “Why do I need to know all about this passage’s poetic structure? Who cares?” The Bible has many styles of literature. Some passages are poetic, some historic, some are apocalyptic...each style has its own interpretive rules. If you don’t differentiate between a poem and an apocalyptic prophecy, your applications are going to be all off. You are going to come up with some very strange theology.

Psalm 119’s structure is not meant merely as poetic device, as many think. Scripture is never just ‘pretty words’ – it is always about revelation of a Person. All Scripture serves as Hashem’s self-revelation. Every word, every letter serves this purpose.

The revelation begins with the Torah of Moses.

- **John 5:39 HCSB** You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me.

- **John 5:46 HCSB** For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me.

Yeshua is not only prophetically foretold in the Torah, **He** is revealed. His personality, character, purpose, and plan saturate the text.

The Prophets and the Writings continue the revelation of Messiah.

- **Luke 24:25-27 HCSB** He said to them, "How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?" (27) Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
- **Luke 24:44-45 HCSB** Then He told them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (45) Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

All of the Old Covenant is the gradual, progressive self-revelation of the Messiah.

- **Matthew 5:17-18 HCSB** "Don't assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. (18) For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter¹ will pass from the law until all things are accomplished.

So what is:

Our Response to Revelation

Paul told Timothy:

- **2 Timothy 3:16 HCSB** All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

So, we must consider David's ode to the Scriptures as a Holy Spirit inspired passage designed to point us toward the Messiah while correcting and training our character by comparing us to His holiness. Paul revealed the Holy Spirit's purpose in:

- **2 Corinthians 3:18 HCSB** We all, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We need to have the same mindset, the same values and the same metaphysical outlook as the Master.² With each word we read, we must ask four questions:

1. How does this reveal the **character** of God?
2. Is this something that God does **for** me?
3. Is this something that God wants **me to do** in response to Him?
4. Is this something that God wants me to **do with** Him?

Parsing our passage

Keeping in mind the definitions for our key terms, let's examine today's passage and answer these four questions shall we?

- **Psalms 119:9 HCSB** How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping Your word (*davar*).
 1. God is pure.
 2. God commands His people to be pure.
 3. I must keep His instructions.
 4. Together we will be holy

¹ yod and every *tittle* [stroke]

² Philippians 2:5

- **Psalms 119:10 HCSB** I have sought You with all my heart; don't let me wander from Your commands (*mitzvot*).
 1. God is nurturing.
 2. God will continue to shepherd me (try to keep me from wandering).
 3. I will seek Him by keeping His commands.³
 4. Together we will reside in green pastures near quiet waters.⁴

- **Psalms 119:11 HCSB** I have treasured Your word (*imrah*) in my heart so that I may not sin against You.
 1. God is holy.
 2. He has provided instruction on practical holiness.
 3. I will treasure His Instructions.
 4. Together we will be righteous.

- **Psalms 119:12 HCSB** LORD, may You be praised; teach me Your statutes (*ch'okim*).
 1. God is the unalterable first principle by which all else is judged.
 2. God the Holy Spirit teaches me where I come up lacking.
 3. I will praise the Lord, embracing His discipline as a good disciple should.
 4. Together our Master/Disciple relationship will flourish.

- **Psalms 119:13 HCSB** With my lips I proclaim all the judgments (*mishpat*) from Your mouth.
 1. God is a righteous judge.
 2. God has supplied righteous judgments; calling on all men to repent.⁵
 3. I will proclaim them wherever I go.
 4. Together we will redeem the world.

- **Psalms 119:14 HCSB** I rejoice in the way *revealed* by Your decrees (*edut*) as much as in all riches.
 1. God is generous.
 2. God has revealed a wholesome way of life to me.
 3. I will value this way of life more than any materialistic pleasure.
 4. Together we will rejoice.

- **Psalms 119:15 HCSB** I will meditate on Your precepts (*pikudim*) and think about Your ways.
 1. God is wise.
 2. God has gifted me with maxims or injunctions as rules of action or conduct.
 3. I will strive to understand them and make them a part of my personal philosophy.
 4. Together we will be revolutionary, counter cultural, turning the world upside down.⁶

- **Psalms 119:16 HCSB** I will delight in Your statutes (*ch'okim*); I will not forget Your word (*dabar*).

³ John 14:15; 15:10; 1 John 2:3

⁴ Psalm 23:2

⁵ Acts 17:30

⁶ Acts 17:6

1. God is a law-maker.
2. God has inspired permanent rules as part of His covenant with mankind.
3. I will delight in them so much that they will never leave my mind.
4. Together we will form a new kind of nation – a people who were not a people.

Simch'a the higher joy

To be truthful, most Adonaists probably concern themselves as much with worldly pleasures as any other people, but I think we also differentiate between hedonistic enjoyment and *simch'a*, the higher joy that comes from appreciating what God has provided.

We find *simch'a* in the written Word of God. We find even more joy in the incarnate Word. The written word is a letter from the Lover of our souls. Jesus is the Lover Himself. I don't know about you, but as precious as His letter to me is, I would far rather possess the reality of His person.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain seventeen different words that are translated as "rejoice." My favorite of these Hebrew words is *sameach'* (sah-MAY-ach). It means "to shine, to gleam, to give forth light, to be bright." In the context of my knowing Jesus, to me it means to be radiant with the joy of God's peace, to beam with the warmth and glow of his love.

That kind of rejoicing does not negate seriousness. We Adonaists are very serious about enjoying our faith. We find humor in the human predicament, but our statements about God and our relationship to Him are very serious.

King David expresses it this way in,

- [Psalms 2:11 HCSB](#) Serve the LORD with reverential awe, and rejoice with trembling.

One who does not believe in God has little to keep him from a cynical attitude, but we who serve the Lord have much in the past, present, and future to give us hope and joy.

God not only forgives the sins and mistakes of our past, he also transforms them into lessons to help us avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Our present difficulties become worth enduring as we look to Him. As we endure, we find small joys that are capable of growing large as we nourish them through contemplation.

What shall we say, then, of the future? Though difficulties may await us, we can say with the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."⁷ Our entire future is as bright as the promises of God.

As a believer in Yeshua, I awake each morning thrilled by the prospect of good things I expect to happen before the end of the day. I love to rise early so things can begin happening, and I eagerly look forward to the rest of the day. There is a special reward to those of us who proclaim the Good News of salvation. As each day progresses, we often receive "good news" from others about the fruits of our labors.

You can experience that kind of joy, too. You need not be an elder in the church to feel it. You only need to remember what God has done and is continuing to do for you in Christ. Then tell others as He gives you the opportunities.

If you meet someone today who does not have a smile, give him or her one of yours and explain why you are smiling. Maybe it will start someone on the path toward gaining the same reason for smiling—rejoicing not just in the Torah, but in the Torah's Lord.

- [Philippians 4:4-5 HCSB](#) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5)
Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

⁷ Philippians 4:13